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ABSTRACT

The most important part of the teacher education program, the student teaching experience, typically receives the least coordinated conceptualization and collaboration between the key partners: the university and the schools. A clinical site, established in a high school or middle school on the model of a teaching hospital, can address two needs simultaneously: serving large numbers of students and providing a high quality teacher preparation experience. A clinical site can break down the characteristic isolation of the student teaching experience for both students and faculty. This program description provides an overview of the professional development school (PDS) project which was established in 1985 as a clinical site by the East Longmeadow (MA) School District and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Topics covered include: the need for clinical sites; recruitment and selection of students; the annual planning and development seminar for university faculty and cooperating clinical instructors; the end of the semester retreat for student teachers, cooperating clinical instructors, and university faculty; program implementation; program development and expansion; research, evaluation, and dissemination; and intended outcomes. (IAH)

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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHOOL

A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT

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East Longmeadow School District

University of Massachusetts at Amherst

The School of Education

Professional Development School

A Collaborative Effort

Designed, Developed, and Co-Directed by:

Peter Cannone, Associate Superintendent,

East Longmeadow School District

Helen Schneider, Professor School of Education,

Secondary Teacher Education Program: Academic Disciplines

Earl Seidman, Professor School of Education,

Secondary Teacher Education Program: Academic Disciplines

This narrative written by Earl Seidman, Helen Schneider, and Peter Cannone.

University of Massachusetts at Amherst-School of Education
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University of Massachusetts at Amherst School of Education
Teacher Education Program/East Longmeadow Professional Development School Model

THE NEED FOR CLINICAL SITES

The Carnegie Report, A Nation Prepared, focused on the need for more and better prepared teachers as the key to school reform. The report documents an urgent need for secondary school teachers who are well versed in their disciplines and who are able to perform competently in the classroom. Complicating the reform effort is the predicted serious shortage of teachers. The U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Educational Statistics predicts a 34.4 per cent shortfall by 1992. While the number of teachers who will be available is critical, their quality--including a sense of both excellence and equity--is even more crucial. To a considerable degree, the quality of future teachers depends on the quality of their teacher education programs. Few would deny that reform of teacher preparation, no matter what the numbers of prospective teachers, is imperative.

The Secondary Teacher Education Program of the School of Education prepares teachers of English, social studies, mathematics and science at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. It offers teacher preparation for undergraduates, post-baccalaureate students, and masters degree students. We have recently recognized that our undergraduate secondary teacher education option may not allow sufficient time for

the development of excellence in both academic learning and classroom performance. Four years of study is not sufficient to gain a grounding in general education, depth in a specific subject matter areas, and the maturity and professional preparation to be an effective classroom teacher. Our affiliation with the Holmes Group is one consequence of our concern in this area. As a program we are moving to a post-baccalaureate and graduate focus in teacher education.

There is an important resource available to all concerned about the quality of teachers and the impending teacher shortage. A large pool of older liberal arts graduates, who turned away from teaching when there were few jobs available, have found careers outside of education unsatisfying. These talented people are now eager to come into teaching. The increasing numbers of such students have contributed to the dramatic rise in our enrollment from a low of 82 in 1982 to the current number of approximately 500.

These older candidates are especially promising. They are well prepared in their subject matter. Because of their maturity and work experience, they know the realities of work and understand the need to make a commitment to their work in order to excel. Many have families and must work part time in order to support themselves while pursuing teacher preparation. Thus they bring to us the richness of their life experience, a desire to learn how to teach, and a commitment to being outstanding teachers.

We have designed a teacher education program for them that is demanding, but flexible and accessible. We have simplified the admissions process form them, but have kept standards for admission high. Our current group of post-baccalaureate students have an average undergraduate grade point average of 3.02. We administer and closely monitor a system of waiving requirements for previous experience and course work. We have scheduled almost all of our courses in the afternoon and evening so that students can maintain a part-time job if necessary. We have developed a curriculum that stresses both the skills of teaching and the social context in which teaching occurs.

These mature students do not lack knowledge of the world of work, but they do need extensive exposure to the schools. They have been out of the schools for some time. They demand an intensive, well planned student teaching situation which offers coordinated support and instruction from university faculty, public school teachers and peers..

The key to such a student teaching program is the cooperating teacher and his or her relationship to the university. There is a large group of experienced and talented teachers in the schools who could be excellent cooperating teachers; however, many of the teachers most suitable to serve as cooperating teachers are feeling enervated,unsympathetic and unprepared for the task of teacher preparation that faces us. Many of the most gifted teachers are tempted

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to leave the profession. They sense that their opportunity to go grow within their work is limited, that their power over what they do is constrained, and that their efforts are neither adequately remunerated nor respected by the communities which they serve.

Many of the potential cooperating teachers have serious reservations about current teacher education practices and strong ideas about how it could be done better. All too often, however, they have no real avenue for sharing what they know about teacher education with the colleges and universities which prepare new teachers. Conversely, there is no substantial way for college and university teacher education faculty to share with high school teachers the long years of knowledge and understanding they have acquired through their experience in teacher education. Distrust, disrespect, and an uneasy sense of hierarchy all too often characterize the relationship between cooperating teachers and college and university teacher education faculties.

The results of research in teacher education are clear, however. The most important part of any teacher education program is the student teaching experience. Unfortunately, as Goodlad (1984) has observed, placement in student teaching sites has been an idiosyncratic and often random process. Teacher education programs are faced with trying to meet the teacher shortage with either level funding or reduced resources. Teacher certification programs are often negatively

characterized as unrealistic in their focus on theory and divorced from the real world of students. Prospective student teachers typically go out individually to neighboring schools to find cooperating teachers willing to work with them. The resulting student teaching experience is uneven in quality and isolating for the student, the cooperating teacher, and the university or college teacher. The experience is randomly excellent, mediocre, or disorganized, with the outcome determined more by luck than design. The most important part of the teacher education program, the student teaching experience, receives the least coordinated conceptualization and collaboration between the key partners: the university and the schools.

A more coherent and integrated practicum experience is necessary for the sake of quality control and for the support and enrichment of both pre-service and experienced teachers. A clinical site, established in a high school or middle school on the model of a teaching hospital, can address two needs simultaneously: serving large numbers of students and providing a high quality teacher preparation experience. A clinical site can break down the characteristic isolation of the student teaching experience for both students and faculty, and provide a sense of opportunity and enrichment for experienced teachers in the schools as well.

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION: EAST LONGMEADOW HIGH SCHOOL, EAST LONGMEADOW, MASSACHUSETTS

For the past seven years, the Secondary Teacher Education Program in the School of Education of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst has conducted a clinical site program at East Longmeadow High School and Birchland Park Middle School in East Longmeadow, Massachusetts. East Longmeadow, a suburban community contiguous to Springfield, Massachusetts, has a strong commitment to the public schools.

The principal of the East Longmeadow High School came to the School of Education in 1985 and invited us to place a cohort of eight to twelve student teachers in his high school. He anticipated considerable turnover in his faculty in the upcoming years. Because he was concerned about the predicted teacher shortage, he wanted to develop a relationship with the university that would give him access to the best of its teacher education graduates in the upcoming years. Equally important, he thought that by engaging his faculty in the preparation of new teachers he could reinforce their engagement with their own teaching and rekindle their sense of opportunity in their careers.

The faculty of the Secondary Teacher Education Program were concerned with improving the nature of the student teaching experience, especially for the increasing numbers of post-baccalaureate students who were returning to the university to prepare for teaching. We were

interested in exploring the development of a clinical site where our student teachers would be actively welcomed and given support from the school community as a whole. We were particularly interested in placing our post-baccalaureate candidates in a setting where they would receive maximum peer support and be able to interact with experienced teachers in a more collegial manner. We also sought to place our student teachers where our university faculty could collaborate with high school faculty to bridge the false dichotomy between theory and practice in teacher education.

Professors Earl Seidman and Helen Schneider and Mr. Peter Cannone, principal of the high school and now associate superintendent, met over the course of a semester and planned a pilot project. The East Longmeadow School District provided seed money for the pilot project, which was conducted during the 1986-87 academic year. The results were so encouraging that we moved from the pilot stage to a fully developed and expanded program. The Fund for the Improvement of Post Secondary Education (FIPSE) awarded our program a three-year grant, to support this effort.

The program committed to developing three clinical sites over the next three years. East Longmeadow High School, site of the pilot project, was the first developed site. Greenfield High School and Holyoke High School were added in the second and third year of the grant. A clinical site provides placement for eight to twelve

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student teachers in the fields of English, social studies, math, science, and foreign languages. The intent was for the university and the high school faculty to collaborate on every phase of development of the clinical setting: design, implementation, assessment, redesign, and eventually, the expansion of the program to other sites. Through that collaboration, we hoped to establish a learning community among high school and university faculty and student teachers that was non-hierarchical, that bridged the split between university and school, that examined deeply the issues of teaching and learning, and that provided the best possible preparation for an excellent group of prospective teachers.

Project Activities

1. Recruitment of Student Teachers for Placement at Clinical Site:

The Secondary Teacher Education program is currently placing 40-60 student teachers in individual teaching sites each semester. As part of their pre-student-teaching experience, prospective student teachers must observe in schools. In order to familiarize prospective student teachers with the clinical site, each semester a clinical site hosts students from the program's introductory teacher education course in an all day field experience at the school. In addition to inviting the university students to observe classes, members of the high school and middle school faculty and administration conduct small group discussions

on critical educational issues, such as tracking, discipline, special education resources, and subject matter specific topics. This field trip serves to familiarize the university students with the high school or middle school and introduces them to the clinical site, where they may choose to apply to student teach in later semesters.

2. Selection of students:

Students are selected for placement in the clinical teaching site through an application and interview procedure. Students must have completed all pre-practicum requirements prior to applying for placement in the clinical site. Priority is given to post-baccalaureate students. Applicants are asked to prepare a resume and cover letter, and to solicit two recommendations. Faculty in the Secondary Teacher Education program screen the applications and recommend prospective student teachers to the East Longmeadow faculty. Prospective student teachers are then interviewed by the cooperating clinical instructors and the principal at the clinical site. Final selection is based on a mutual decision of the high school and university faculties.

3. Planning the clinical site experience:

Considerable planning experience has already been gained in our pilot experience with East Longmeadow. As a result, we have instituted as central to all clinical sites a planning and development seminar for participating cooperating high school faculty and administrators.

a. Planning and development seminar:

To accomplish the needed planning, a two-day seminar is held each year on the university campus prior to the placement of student teachers at the clinical site. At this seminar, university faculty and cooperating clinical instructors meet together to establish goals for the year, and to decide upon the basic design of the program.

This two-day seminar serves as the introduction to a year-long planning and development and teacher education seminar, which the cooperating teachers will take for three graduate credits each year. The syllabus for this course includes setting goals for the program, designing the structure of the program, examining basic issues in secondary schooling and teacher education, and examining issues of supervision. In addition, seminar participants develop the syllabus for the student teaching supervisory seminar which the high school and university faculty co-teach. The remainder of the graduate seminar meetings occur on-site at the clinical high school throughout the semester while the student teachers are in residence.

B. End of semester retreat:

At the end of each semester, the student teachers, cooperating clinical instructors and university faculty participate in a one-day retreat to review the experience of the semester and plan for the upcoming semester. Such a retreat was held in April of 1987 to assess the pilot project. From that retreat we learned, for example, that department heads should not have student teachers placed solely with them, although department heads can share student teachers and should continue to be a part of the planning committee for the project. We have learned that it is crucial that the student teachers placed at the site be roughly equivalent assignments lest perceived inequities of responsibility and expectations cause tension among the participating student teachers. We have also learned that while an initial design can be established for a semester's experience, that design needs continual review by the participating school and university faculty. Finally, we have learned that in addition to attending to the structure and design of the actual student teaching experience, much more work has to be done on the supervisory seminars conducted on-site by high school and university faculty for the student teachers. Our experience is that both the high school teachers and the student teachers want to develop a seminar that deals both with the exigencies of every day teaching and

the consideration of issues of broader educational concern.

4. Implementation of the program:

Clinical sites may choose to place student teachers either both semesters or one semester per year. In a typical semester eight to ten student teachers will be placed as a cohort at the site. Each will work with one or two cooperating teachers under the supervision of a cooperating clinical instructor who may or may not be one of the cooperating teachers. Student teachers take increasing responsibility as the semester progresses and will ultimately have full responsibility for three classes and a minimum of two preparations.

In addition to classroom experience, the student teachers will participate fully in all aspects of the school. They will be encouraged to participate in sponsoring extra-curricular activities, have administrative responsibilities as appropriate, and, under the guidance of the cooperating teacher, gain experience in the full range of teaching responsibilities.

In addition to their cooperating teachers, the student teachers will have the support of a university supervisor who will spend a minimum of two days a week at the school site observing classes and meeting with student teachers. Once every other week the student teachers will meet as a group at the site with their university supervisor to discuss issues of common concern. On alternate weeks, the

student teachers will meet with the director of the program, the university supervisor, and the cooperating clinical instructors in a seminar on teaching.

Ideally, student teachers will be assigned a common planning period during the course of the day when they will be able to meet with the director of the program and other faculty both from the university and the school site.

To support the supervisory program and to inform the seminar on teaching, we developed an extensive program of video-taping student teachers. We have extensive experience using video-taping as a resource for supervision of student teachers. Is is one of the most powerful tools available for developing the ability of student teachers to assess their own performance and to become conscious of both their strengths and the areas in which they need work. School of Education faculty were among the originators of the practice of using video-taping for supervisory purposes in micro-teaching. (See Seidman and Cooper, "From Supervision to Self Vision," Journal of Secondary Education, January, 1969.) The advent of the VCR has made videotaping an even more powerful instructional tool; each student teacher has a cassette documenting their progress from the pre-practicum through their student teaching experience. (Clinical faculty at East Longmeadow have been so receptive to the use of the video-tape that the school has invested in appropriate

video-taping and playback equipment. Some cooperating teachers have expressed an interest in video-taping their own classes as a means of improving their own teaching.

These are the formal pre-planned aspects of the program. Our experience in the program indicates that some of the informal and spontaneous aspects of the program are as important as the formal ones. For example, students in the program often car pool to the clinical site. Instead of feeling isolated in their student teaching site, they have developed a sense of community among themselves which has been a significant source of support for them.

School of Education faculty, in order to get first-hand knowledge of each aspect of the program, have acted as supervisors for some student teachers. They have gained new insights into the everyday working of the program and have come to know the teachers at the clinical site well. As a result, they have been asked to discuss issues of curriculum and pedagogy quite unrelated to the direct demands of the clinical site program. Faculty from the clinical site have been guest lecturers at teaching methods classes at the university. And, finally, the high school and middle school faculties involved in the program have begun talking with each other and their principals in a way unprecedented in their experience in the school. The program has brought them together as a group to discuss issues of concern and to

share ideas about teaching and teacher education.

5. Development and expansion of the program:

A. In addition to assessing and improving the existing design and operation of the program, we developed two additional clinical sites, one in a large urban setting with a school that serves a diverse population, Holyoke High School, and another in a consolidated rural or small town school district, Greenfield High School.

Our teacher education program has a long-standing commitment to preparing teachers to work in racially diverse schools. We are working to establish a collaborative relationship leading to a clinical site in an urban school district. During the summer of 1988, we offered a teacher education seminar for teachers and administrators involved in clinical site development. University faculty, experienced clinical instructors from East Longmeadow High School, and faculty and staff from new clinical sites met together for two days. We reviewed crucial issues in the operation of a clinical site and worked to develop mentoring skills.

In the 1988-89 academic year we continued the planning, development and teacher education seminar. We placed student teachers at the new clinical site in the spring of 1989. While the characteristics of the second site were based on our experience in East Longmeadow, we recognized and adjusted to the need of developing program

characteristics that were particularly appropriate to the new site.

In the summer of 1989, we conducted another introductory seminar, using faculty from both East Longmeadow and the second site to introduce the concept and work with teachers from the third clinical site which we envisioned. We placed student teachers in the third site in the spring of 1990.

B. In addition to expanding the number of sites, our intention was to invite other departments in the university who were preparing secondary teachers in separate programs to participate with us in the clinical site program. Specifically, we invited the departments preparing students in foreign languages, home economics, art, and physical education to supplement our core academic areas at the clinical site.

C. Through participation in the clinical site project, we encouraged increased interchange between university and high school faculty. University faculty were resources to the high school and middle school on site, and high school and middle school faculty acted as resources for the pre-practicum at the university.

D. Research evaluation, and dissemination:

To evaluate the outcomes of the program, to provide information for the improvement of the program, and to deepen our understanding of the work of beginning and experienced high school and middle school teachers

so that we might better inform teacher education programs, we conducted a program of in-depth, phenomenological interviews with participants in the program at each of the clinical sites. Using material from the interviews and other descriptive and analytical data, we shared the results of our program with other interested institutions.

To assess whether the program was achieving its intended outcomes, we began an intensive program of qualitative research and evaluation. We conducted a series of three, one and one-half hour, in-depth interviews with each of the student teachers and a selected sample of the teachers and administrators in the program.

We interviewed all the student teachers and an extensive sample of the cooperating teachers and administrators in the clinical site program. It was also useful to interview some student teachers and their cooperating teachers working at conventional student teaching sites in order to develop comparative data.

The three-interview sequence focused on how the participants came to be in the clinical site program, what their experience in the program was like, and what it meant to them. The interviews served the dual purpose of research and evaluation. They added to our understanding of the work of beginning and experienced teachers and gave us

important information on the workings of the program which we then used to make programmatic adjustments.

This interview methodology and the method of reporting results of the research was based on Professor Seidman's previous work on community college faculty, published as: In The Words of the Faculty (Earl Seidman, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1985). The interviews provided data that allowed us to assess how well we were accomplishing our objectives. This interview research also provided rich material which we shared with other teacher education institutions and school districts.

In addition to the program of in-depth interviews, we tracked our students' progress through the program and after graduation. We gathered data on completion of certification and placement in teaching positions. These data provided a useful comparison to similar data on students in our certification program who have not worked at clinical sites.

INTENDED OUTCOMES

The primary intended outcome is to develop and carry out a more rational, collaboratively designed student teaching experience to bridge the dichotomy that currently exists between the university or college-based teacher education programs and teachers in the schools. That dichotomy is not in the best interest of either the school or university faculty. It detracts from what they have to offer to each

other and to prospective teachers. The clinical site program will bring university faculty and high school teachers and administrators together to work for the goal of improved teacher preparation and mutual professional support.

There are more specific intended outcomes for each of the groups of participants in the program.

A. Student Teachers:

--The clinical site program will provide a placement for the student teachers where they will feel like welcome additions to the school community rather than burdensome outsiders.

--Student teachers in a clinical site will have a community of support while they are learning rather than working in isolation.

--Because the administration of a school will have to be committed to the clinical site in order for it to develop, it can be expected that administrative staff of the clinical site will offer support to the student teachers that will complement that which they receive from the cooperating teachers.

--University supervisors will be able to offer more of their attention to the student teachers who are located in a group in one site than they would to individual student teachers randomly placed in a wide geographical area.

B. High School and Middle School Teachers:

--Our project has shown us that participation in the project helps to

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break down the sense of isolation many classroom teachers feel in their work.

--Participation in the project will build cross-departmental cooperation within schools and, in the later phase of the project, between faculty in separate schools and districts.

--Participation in the process will raise the consciousness of individual teachers as they begin to share with student teachers their ideas about teaching and learning in their subject areas.

--Participation in the project will raise individual teachers' interest in broader issues of teaching and learning as they see how their concerns are not just particular to their experience but reflect the broader system of education of which they are a part.

--Teachers who participate in the project will gain a sense of career opportunity in the area of teacher education. Up to now, the only avenue of advancement for teachers has been administration; this program will allow teachers to advance professionally without leaving the classroom and will establish the organic condition for an approach to differentiated staffing within a school, if that seems desirable.

--Participating teacher will clarify their own assumptions about teaching and learning as they interact with prospective teachers, university faculty, and the most recent research on teaching and learning.

C. School Administrators:

--Participating school administrators will have access to a cadre of prospective teachers whom they have helped to prepare at a time when a shortage of teachers is being predicted.

--Participating administrators will have broader and easier access to university resources that will be of use to their school.

--Participation in the project will establish a sense of being special for the school and will contribute to creating community and business support for the school.

--Participation in the project will increase the morale of participating faculty and encourage their professional revitalization, a goal of any far-sighted administrator.

--Administrators themselves will benefit from the sense of opportunity to contribute to teacher education and will view it as an area of intellectual and professional growth for themselves.

D. High School and Middle School Students:

--High school and middle school students in clinical sites will have access to a cadre of younger teachers to whom they can relate. In an urban setting especially, student teachers from the university can raise a sense of expectation and aspiration for a college education. (One impact of the caps imposed on the property tax in Massachusetts was to severely curtail the hiring of new young teachers.)

E. The University:

--Placement of student teachers will become a more rational, well conceived, and coordinated process.

--Because collaboration with cooperating clinical instructors in the school will yield a better designed and implemented student teaching program, the morale of participating teacher educators will improve.

--University faculty will get off their campuses and be more routinely involved with the clinical sites. They will thereby be better informed by the realities of the schools and better able to share their understanding with the faculty, administrators, and student teachers with whom they are working.

--University faculty will work cooperatively with teachers, thus breaking down the dysfunctional hierarchy that usually undermines relationships between university and high school faculty and which fosters a false dichotomy between theory and practice.

We believe that the intended outcomes for each of the groups of participants contributing to a clinical site are significant. But we also believe that the sum will be greater than the individual parts. Working as part of a learning and teaching community with shared goals will in and of itself be more productive than working in an isolated,

even competitive environment, where participants often operate at cross purposes.

SUPPORT

The clinical site project was supported in part by a grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education and by a grant from the East Longmeadow school district. The support of Harold Raynolds, former Commissioner of Education of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, has been important to the development of the program. We believe that our efforts in this clinical site project are more than consistent with the agenda for reform in teaching and teacher education which has come to the forefront of national attention. With the support of FIPSE we were able to establish a record of performance that allowed us to share our undertaking broadly and earn both institutional and state support for the concept.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The co-directors of the program are Professors Earl Seidman and Helen Schneider of the School of Education at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and Mr. Peter Cannone, Associate Superintendent of the East Longmeadow public schools. People interested in further information about the clinical site project should contact any of the co-directors as follows:

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